

Some Aspects of American Bibliography

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I.

In conferring upon me the presidency of this Association, I felt that you wished to pay a compliment to a man who had been much helped by libraries and who knew their value, and I hoped that it was, perhaps, in recognition of the fact that a practical and busy physician may be at the same time a book lover, even a book worm.

You are familiar, of course, with the objects of this Association, but as there are present with us also those who are not members, this is an occasion in which a little missionary work is timely, and I may briefly refer to some of them. An association of the medical libraries of the country, our membership includes both the great libraries, with 50,000-100,000 volumes, and the small collections just started of a few hundred books. The former gain nothing directly from an affiliation with us—they give more than they get, but the blessing that goes with this attitude is not to be despised, and from their representatives we look for guidance and advice. Please understand that in this address I am not talking to the men in charge of them who are familiar with what I shall say, and who are experts where I am only a dabbler; but I wish to catch the inexperienced, those in charge of the small but growing libraries, upon whom I wish to impress some wider aspects of the work. In the recent history of the profession there is nothing more encouraging than the increase in the number of medical libraries.

The organization of a library means effort, it means union, it means progress. It does good to men who start it, who help with money, with time and with the gifts of books. It does good to the young men, with whom our hopes rest, and a library gradually and insensibly molds the profession of a town to a better and higher status.

We trust that this Association may be a medium through which men interested in the promotion of the welfare of the profession may do much good in a quiet way. We have to thank some twenty physicians who have kindly joined us in this work and whose subscriptions help to pay the expenses of our exchange; but their names on our list do more—it is an encouragement to know that they are with us, and as they get nothing in return (except the BULLETIN) they should know how much we appreciate their fellowship. We have to thank, in particular, many editors who send us their journals for distribution, and the editors of many Transactions. The liberality with which the work of our Exchange has been aided by the large libraries is beyond all praise. Time and again the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office, the Academy of Medicine of New York, the Boston Medical Library Association and the College of Physicians' Library of Philadelphia have filled long lists of wants for smaller libraries. The profession is deeply indebted to Drs. Merrill, Chadwick, and Brigham, to Mr. Brownne and to Mr. C. P. Fisher for their disinterested labors. In some details our machinery could be better adjusted, but we have had to work with very little money, which means slight clerical help where much is needed, but with an increasing membership we can look forward confidently to a much more complete organization and to a wider field of usefulness.

But this Association may have other ambitions and hopes. We desire to foster among our members and in the profession at large a proper love of books. For its own sake and for the sake of what it brings, medical bibliography is worthy of a closer study than it has received heretofore in this country. The subject presents three aspects, the book itself, the book as a literary record, *i. e.*, its contents, and the book in relation to

the author. Strictly speaking, bibliography means the science of everything relating to the book itself, and has nothing to do with its contents. In the words of a recent writer, the bibliographer "has to do with editions and their peculiarities, with places, printers, and dates, with types and illustrations, with sizes and collations, with bindings and owners, with classifications, collections, and catalogues. It is the book as a material object in the world that is his care, not the instruction of which it may be, or may fail to be, the vehicle. Bibliography is the science or the art, or both, of book description."*

But there is a larger sense of the word, and I shall discuss some aspects of American medical bibliography in the threefold relationship to which I have referred.

II.

The typographical considerations may be passed over with a few words. We have no Aldus or Froben or Stephanus or Elzevir, whose books are sought and prized for themselves, irrespective of their contents. With few exceptions the medical works published here at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries were poor specimens of the printer's art. Compare a Sydenham first edition of 1682 with Caldwell's Cullen, issued in Philadelphia more than 100 years later, and the comparison is in favor of the former; and yet there is much of bibliographical interest in early American publications. It would make an instructive exhibit to take a series of surgical books issued in this country from "Jones' Manual" in 1776 to "Kelly's Operative Gynecology;" it would illustrate the progress in the art of book making, and while there would be nothing striking or original, such volumes as "Dorsey's Elements of Surgery" (1813), particularly in the matter of illustrations, would show that there were good book makers at that date. At one of the meetings of the American Medical Association a selection of the works issued during the

* Professor Ferguson, "Some Aspects of Bibliography," Edinburgh, 1900.

117 years of the existence of the house of Lea Brothers would form an instructive exhibition. There are few medical works in this country the genealogy of which require any long search. Other than the "Code of Ethics" of the American Medical Association and the "American Pharmacopeia," both of which, by the way, have histories worth tracking, and the "Dispensatory" of Wood and Bache, I know of no works fifty years old which continue to be reprinted. Compared with the text-books, etc., the journals of the early days were more presentable, and the general appearance of such publications as the *Medical Repository*, of New York, the *Medical Museum*, of Philadelphia, and later the *Medical and Physical Journal*, the *North American Medical and Surgical Journal* and the *Medical Recorder*, not only compare favorably with European journals of the period, but one gets an impression of capable and scholarly editorial control and a high grade of original contribution. The *Medical and Physical Journal*, founded in 1820, has a special interest and should be put on the shelves just before the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, into which it merged, one of the few great journals of the world, and the one from which one can almost write the progress of American medicine during the past century.

While there is not in American medicine much of pure typographical interest, a compensation is offered in one of the most stupendous bibliographical works ever undertaken. The Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office atones for all shortcomings, as in it is furnished to the world a universal medical bibliography from the earliest times. It will ever remain a monument to the Army Medical Department, to the enterprise, energy and care of Dr. Billings, and to the scholarship of his associate, Dr. Robert Fletcher. Ambitious men before Dr. Billings had dreamt of a comprehensive medical bibliography. Conrad Gesner, the learned Swiss naturalist and physician, had published up to Section 21 his "Bibliographia Universalis" (1545). Section 20, which was to represent the quintessence of the labors of his life and which was to include the medical bibliography, never appeared, owing to his untimely yet happy

death—*felix mors Gesneri*, as Caius says, in the touching tribute to his friend.* Merklin, von Haller, Haeser, Young, Forbes, Atkinson and others have dipped into the vast subject, but their efforts are Lilliputian beside the Gargantuan undertaking of the Surgeon-General's Office. One work I cannot pass without a regret and a reference—the unfinished medical bibliography of James Atkinson, London, 1834. If not on your shelves, keep your eyes on the London catalogues for it. It only includes the letters A and B, but it is a unique work by a Thelemite, a true disciple of Rabelais. I need not refer in this audience to the use of the Index-Catalogue in library work; it is also of incalculable value to any one interested in books. Let me give an everyday illustration. From the library of my friend, the late Dr. Rush Huidekoper, was sent to me a set of very choice old tomes, among which was a handsome folio of the works of du Laurens, a sixteenth century anatomist and physician. I had never heard of him, but was very much interested in some of his medical dissertations. In a few moments from the Index-Catalogue the whole bibliography of the man was before me, the dates of his birth and death, the source of his biography, and where to look for his portrait. It is impossible to overestimate the boon which this work is to book lovers. One other point—the Index is not used enough by students. Take under the subject of diseases of the heart. Only the other day I referred to a journal article which had a very full bibliography, and I turned to Volume V in the old series, and to the just issued Volume VI of the new series, and there was the literature in full on this subject and in it many articles which the author had overlooked. The entire bibliography might have been omitted with advantage from the paper and simply a reference made to the Index-Catalogue. It would be well in future if writers would bear in mind that on many subjects, particularly those covered by the second series of the Catalogue, the bibliography is very complete, and only supplementary references should be made to the articles which have

* Caii Opera, Jebb's edition.

appeared since the volume of the new series dealing with the subject was printed.

III.

The second aspect of a book relates to its contents, which may have an enduring value or which may be of interest only as illustrating a phase in the progress of knowledge, or the importance may relate to the conditions under which the book appeared.

It is sad to think how useless are a majority of the works on our shelves—the old cyclopedias and dictionaries, the files of defunct journals, the endless editions of text-books as dead as the authors. Only a few epoch-making works survive. Editions of the Hippocratic writings appear from time to time, and in the revival of the study of the history of medicine the writings of such masters as Galen and Aretæus reappear, but the interest is scholastic, and amid the multiplicity of studies how can we ask the student to make himself familiar with the ancients? We can, however, approach the consideration of most subjects from an historical standpoint, and the young doctor who thinks that pathology began with Virchow gets about the same erroneous notion as the student who begins the study of American history with the Declaration of Independence.

Now among the colossal mass of rubbish on the shelves there are precious gems which should be polished and well set and in every library put out on view. But let me first mollify the harshness of the expression just used. The other day, thinking in this way, I took from a shelf of old books the first one I touched. It was Currie's "Historical Account of the Climates and Diseases of the United States of America," published in Philadelphia in 1792. I had possessed it for years, but had never before looked into it. I found the first comprehensive study on climatology and epidemiology made in this country, one which antedates by several years Noah Webster's work on epidemics. With remarkable industry Dr. Currie collected from correspondents in all parts of the country information about the prevalent diseases, and I know of no other work from

which we can get a first-hand sketch from the practitioners themselves of the maladies prevalent in the different States. Then I had to look up his possible relationship with James Currie, of Liverpool, the strong advocate of hydrotherapy, the friend and editor of Burns, who had had, I remembered, interesting affiliations with Virginia. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War he was employed as a clerk at one of the landings on the James River, and suffered not a little for the Tory cause. His letters, given in his "Life," which are well worth reading, give a valuable picture of the period. The American Currie's book at least was not rubbish in 1792, but who will read it now? And yet it is on our shelves for a purpose. It may not be called for once in five years; it did a good work in its day, and the author lived a life of unselfish devotion to the profession. As a maker of much which in a few years will be *rubbish* of this kind, let me take back the harsh expression.

But I wish to refer particularly to certain treasures in American bibliography which you should all have on your shelves. Of course the great libraries have most of them, and yet not all have all of them, but with a little effort they can be picked up. Take that notable "Discourse upon the Institution of Medical Schools in America," by John Morgan, M.D., 1765. From it dates the organization of medical colleges in this country, but there is much more in this scholarly address. The introduction contains a picture of the state of practice in Philadelphia which is in its way unique, and for the first time in the history of the profession in this country Morgan tried to introduce what he calls the regular mode of practising physic, as apart from the work of the surgeon and apothecary. What interests us, too, here is his plea for the establishment of a medical library. Listen to his appeal: "Perhaps the physicians of Philadelphia, touched with generous sentiments of regard for the rising generation and the manifest advantages accruing to the College thereby, would spare some useful books or contribute somewhat as a foundation on which we might begin." The biographical fragments in the introduction show the remarkable care with which

some of the young colonial physicians sought the best available education. Few to-day, after a protracted apprenticeship, do as did Morgan, spend five years in Europe under the most celebrated masters, but he returned a distinguished Fellow of the Royal Society of London, and a Correspondent of the Royal Academy of Surgery in Paris.

John Jones' "Plain, Practical, Concise, Remarks on the Treatment of Wounds and Fractures, Designed for the Use of Young Military and Naval Surgeons in North America," 1776, was the *vade mecum* of the young surgeons in the Revolutionary War. As the first separate surgical treatise published in this country it has a distinct bibliographical value, and, when possible, you should put the three editions together.

Samuel Bard's study on "Angina Suffocativa" (1771), or diphtheria, as it would be now termed, is an American classic of the first rank. It is difficult to get, but it is worth looking for. Get, too, his work on "Midwifery," 1807, the first published in this country. An enterprising librarian will have all the editions of such a work.

Thomas Bond's "Lecture Introductory to the Study of Clinical Medicine at the Pennsylvania Hospital," 1766, remained in manuscript until printed in Vol. IV of the *North American Medical Journal*, 1827, a copy of which is not difficult to obtain. It is also republished in Morton's "History of the Pennsylvania Hospital," and I republished it in the *University Medical Magazine* in 1897.

The works of Rush should be fully represented even in the smaller libraries. His collected writings passed through five editions and are easy to get. Rush "is the father not only of American medicine, but of American medical literature, the type of a great man, many-sided, far-seeing, full of intellect and genius; abused and vilified, as man hardly ever was before, by his contemporaries, professional and non-professional; misunderstood by his immediate successors, and unappreciated by the present generation, few of whom know anything of his real character." I gladly quote this estimate of Rush by S. D. Gross. Owing to the impression that he was disloyal to Wash-

ington, there has arisen of late a certain feeling of antagonism to his name. The truth is he was a strong hater, and, as was common at that period, a bitter partisan. I wish some one would give us the account from contemporary letters, and from the side of Rush. There is an astonishing amount of bibliographical interest in the writings of Rush, and a good story awaits the leisure hours of some capable young physician. His letters are innumerable and scattered in many libraries. I came across one the other day ("Bulletin of the New York Library," Vol. I, No. 8), dated July 27, 1803, in which, replying to an invitation from Horatio Gates, he says pathetically, "A large and expensive family chain me to the pestle and mortar," and in a postscript he adds that as he now confines his labors to his patients, without trying to combat ignorance and error, he is kindly tolerated by his fellow-citizens.

Many early works of great importance are difficult to find, such as Elisha North on "Spotted Typhus" or cerebrospinal fever, 1811. Noah Webster's "History of Epidemics" has a special value, apart from its interest as the most important medical work written in this country by a layman.

The tracts on vaccination by Waterhouse—the American Jenner—should be sought for carefully. Try to have a copy of Nathan Smith's "A Practical Essay on Typhous Fever" (1824) to hand to any young physician who asks for something good and fresh on typhoid fever. There is a long list of important essays which you should have. I cannot begin to name them all, but such as Jacob Bigelow on "Self-limited Diseases," 1835, which is a tract every senior student should read, mark, learn and inwardly digest. If not obtainable, his "Nature in Disease," 1859, contains it and many other essays of value. James Jackson's "Letters to a Young Physician," 1856, are still worth reading—worth republishing.

The stories of the great epidemics offer material for careful bibliographical research. Mathew Carey's graphic description of the great epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia, while not so lifelike and brilliant as De Foe's great story of the plague in London, has the advantage of the tale of an eye-witness and of

a brave man, one of the small band who rose above the panic of those awful days. It is a classic of the first rank. The little book, by the way, had a remarkable sale. The first edition is dated November 13, 1793, the second, November 23, the third, November 30, and the fourth, January 16, 1794. Brockden Brown's "Arthur Mervyn," while it gives in places a vivid description of this epidemic, is, in comparison, disappointing and lame, not worthy to be placed on the same shelf with Carey's remarkable account.

Even the smaller libraries should have the works of this type. They are not hard to get, if sought for in the right way. Early American works on special subjects should be sought for. Such a collection of works on ophthalmology as is in exhibit in the section on this subject at the meeting of the American Medical Association is most instructive, and shows the early publications of this country.

IV.

The third aspect of medical bibliography relates to writings which have a value to us from our interest in the author. After all, the true bibliophile cares not so much for the book as for the man whose life and mind are illustrated in it. There are men of noble life and high character, every scrap of whose writings should be precious to us, and such men are not rare. The works are not always of any special value to-day, or even of any intrinsic interest, but they appeal to us through the sympathy and even the affection, stirred in us by the story of the man's life. It is, I know, a not uncommon feeling—a feeling which pervades No. XXXII of Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and is so beautifully expressed in the concluding line, "Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love." Such an attitude I feel personally toward the literary remains of John Morgan, David Ramsay, Daniel Drake, John D. Godman, James Jackson, Jr., Elisha Bartlett and others.

In our libraries under John Morgan, to whose remarkable essay I have already referred, there should be also his "Vindication," which gives the story of the Army Medical Depart-

ment in the early days of the Revolution. One of the most famous names in American medicine is David Ramsay, perhaps the most distinguished pupil of Benjamin Rush, a man of high character, full of zeal and ambition and devoted to his profession, yet what he has left in general literature far excels in importance his medical writings. The larger libraries should have his famous "History of the American Revolution," 1789, his "Life of Washington" and the "History of South Carolina," 1809. The memory of such a man should be cherished among us, and one way—and the best—is to put a complete set of his writings on our shelves.

Another noble soul of the same stamp was John D. Godman, the tragedy of whose life and early death has a pathos unequaled in the annals of the profession of America. Besides his anatomical works, his "Museum of American Natural History" and "The Rambles of a Naturalist" should be among your treasured Americana.

There is a large literature in this group illustrating the excursions of medical men into pure literature. A complete set of the writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes should be in every medical library. His Boylston prize essays on "Neuralgia," on "Malarial Fever," and on "Direct Explorations" can be had bound in one volume. One of his writings is inestimable, and will be remembered in the profession as long, I believe, as posterity will cherish his "Chambered Nautilus" or the "Last Leaf." If you can find the original pamphlet on the "Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever," a reprint from the *New England Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, 1844, have it bound in crushed levant—'tis worthy of it. The reprint of 1855 is more accessible. Failing either of these, get the journal and cut out and bind the article. Semmelweiss, who gets the credit for introducing asepsis in midwifery, came some years later. Occasionally a well-known medical writer will dabble in pure literature, and will sometimes, as in the case of Dr. Weir Mitchell, attain a success as remarkable as that which he has had in his profession. Put his writings on the shelves—they illustrate his breadth and his strength. A volume of poems

may illustrate some strong man's foible. George B. Wood's epic poem, "First and Last," and the "Eolopœsis" of Jacob Bigelow illustrate the dangers which beset physicians who write poetry.

Biography is a department which you will find a very attractive and a most profitable field to cultivate for your readers. The foreign literature includes several comprehensive encyclopedias, but it is not a department very well represented in this country. It is true that an enormous literature exists, chiefly in periodicals, but the sort of biography to which I refer has a threefold distinction. The subject is a worthy one; he is dead, and the writer has the necessary qualifications for the task. We possess three notable works on American medical biography: James Thacher, 1828; Stephen W. Williams, 1845, and Samuel D. Gross, 1861, which remain to-day the chief works of reference to the latter date. Thacher's is a remarkable production and for the period a most ambitious work. It has been a common tap to which writers have gone for information on the history of medicine in this country, and the lives of the prominent physicians to about 1825. It is a rare volume now, but worth its price, and I know of no more fascinating book, or one more difficult to put down. Even the printed list of subscribers—a long one, too—is most interesting. Many of Thacher's best known books come in the third category, and are of value in a medical library only so far as they illustrate the remarkable versatility of the man. His "Practice," the first American one, you will, of course, try to get, and you should also have one of the editions of his "Journal of the Revolutionary War," through which he served with pencil, as well as scalpel, in hand. It is a most graphic account, and of interest to us here since he describes very fully the campaign in this region, which led to the surrender of Burgoyne, the treachery of Arnold, and he was an eye-witness of the tragic end of poor Major André. You will not find it easy to get a complete set of his writings.

There are many single volumes for which you will be on the lookout. Caldwell's "Autobiography" is a storehouse of facts

(and fancies!) relating to the University of Pennsylvania, to Rush and to the early days of the Transylvania University and the Cincinnati schools. Pickled, as it is, in vinegar, the work is sure to survive.

Have carefully rebound James Jackson's *Memoir of his son* (1835), and put it in the way of the young men among your readers. Few biographies will do them more good.

For the curious pick up the literature on the Chapman-Pattison quarrel, and anything, in fact, relating to that vivacious and pugnacious Scot, Granville Sharpe Pattison.

There are a few full-blown medical biographies of special interest to us: The life and writings of that remarkable philosopher and physician, Wells, of Charleston. The life of John C. Warren (1860) is full of interest, and in the "Essays" of David Hossack you will get the inner history of the profession in New York during the early years of the last century. In many ways Daniel Drake is the most unique figure in the history of American medicine. Get his "Life," by Mansfield, and his "Pioneer Life in Kentucky." He literally made Cincinnati, having "boomed" it in the early days in his celebrated "Picture of Cincinnati," 1815. He founded nearly everything that is old and good in that city. His monumental work on "The Diseases of the Mississippi Valley" is in every library; pick out from the catalogues every scrap of his writings.

I must bring these "splintery," rambling remarks to a close, but I hope that I may have stirred in you an interest in some of the wider aspects of American medical bibliography—I mean aspects other than the daily demand upon you for new books, new editions and new journals.

Keep ever in view, each one in this circle, the important fact that a library should be a storehouse of everything relating to this history of the profession of the locality. Refuse nothing, especially if it is old; letters, manuscripts of all kinds, pictures, everything illustrating the growth, as well as the past condition, should be preserved and tabulated. There is usually, in each community a man who is fond of work of this sort. Encourage him in every possible way. Think of the legacy left by Dr.

Toner, of Washington, rich in materials for the history of the profession during the Revolutionary War! There should be a local pride in collecting the writings and manuscripts of the men who have made a school or a city famous. It is astonishing how much manuscript material is stowed away in old chests and desks. Take, for example, the recent "find" of Dr. Cordell of the letters of the younger Wiesenthal, of Baltimore, describing student life in London about the middle of the eighteenth century. Think of the precious letters of that noble old man, Nathan Smith, full of details about the foundations of the Dartmouth and the Yale Schools of Medicine! Valuable now (too valuable to be in private hands), what will they be 100 or 200 years hence!

What should attract us all is a study of the growth of the American mind in medicine since the starting of the colonies. As in a mirror this story is reflected in the literature of which you are the guardians and collectors—in letters, in manuscripts, in pamphlets, in books and in journals. In the eight generations which have passed, the men who have striven and struggled—men whose lives are best described in the words of St. Paul, in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst and in fastings—these men, of some of whom I have told you somewhat, have made us what we are. With the irrevocable past into which they have gone lies our future, since our condition is the resultant of forces which, in these generations, have molded the profession of a new and mighty empire. From the vantage ground of a young century we can trace in the literature how three great streams of influence—English, French and German—have blended into the broad current of American medicine on which we are afloat. Adaptiveness, lucidity and thoroughness may be said to be the characteristics of these Anglican, Gallic and Teutonic influences, and it is no small part of your duty to see that these influences, the combination of which gives to medicine on this continent its distinctively eclectic quality, are maintained and extended.